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TATA

by Tan Boon Chiou
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HONORABLE MENTION

Inspired by the vernacular architecture of the Tammari people of Benin



DESIGN CONCEPT

This design draws its inspiration directly from the tata somba, two-story huts built by the Tammari people of northwest Benin. The tata huts original structure highlight familial congregation and protection signified by encircling high walls. This layout consists of multi-story tubal chambers that interconnect with other chambers creating a space of continuous communal flux.

PLAN AND LAYOUT

In order to capture the same essence of interconnectedness evident in the traditional tata somba layout, the more modern plan includes peripheral chambers that surround the central focus point in the congregation of huts.

This plan promotes a harmonious lifestyle by providing ease of access to exterior spaces such as patios and courtyards in order to experience the exterior landscaping. Along with ease of access, the simple banco facade and the varying height of the tubal towers and walls also help to create a harmonious symphony with the background landscape.

This layout calls for the use of high walls that was initially intended to protect the community from intruders, now used for protection of living space privacy. Low wall fencing is also introduced to this design and is used to border the courtyard. The use of low walls promotes neighborhood wellness which was a feature previously lacking in the traditional build but is now necessary in modern urban settings.

MATERIALS AND AESTHETICS

Traditional mud-brick, also known as banco is used as the primary construction ingredient for the huts, with an added 8% of cement. The cement is added to stabilize the compound of mud and straw to prevent erosion, increase durability, and reduce the need to reapply the plaster.

The color scheme of the huts often complement the natural mud brown color of the banco. The cubic theme of the gate design echoes African motifs by aligning various square geometries into the traditional patterns.

APPEALING POINTS OF TATA

The design seeks to modernize traditional Tata Somba designs by invigorating the traditional construction expertise as well as revamping old knowledge of material usage and space allocation. The huts also exude modernity in aesthetics and function ranging from form, color, privacy, and comfort.

The widely abundant building materials used, such as mud and straw, allow for the continuous benefit of low cost materials, in addition to increasing the longevity of the structure. The rooms are also designed with multiple door and window openings allowing for passive ventilation heat reduction.

